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HISTORY OF SEBA BEACH

By R. P. Cull

Seba Beach, Alta., March 1944.

To

Dr. H.B. Wood,
400 Tegler Bldg., Edmonton.

Dear Sir:

Regarding your enquiry about the "Beginning of Seba Beach" and its history to the time it was incorporated as a Summer Village I am sending you the following Story of Seba, from my experience with its beginnings and growth.

I came to Edmonton in April, 1906, and after looking at land east of Edmonton, I decided that I was going in the wrong direction to find what I desired,--good hunting, fishing, woods and lakes. So I returned to Edmonton and started west, going to old Spruce Grove by livery team, catching the mail carrier there, and going to old Stony Plain,--then to Inga, and on to Mewassin for the night. Next morning, again travelling with the mail carrier, north across the Indian Reserve to Wabamun, which was then located at the east end of Moonlight Bay,--then known as Cow Dung Bay,--and the lake was locally called White Whale Lake. Wabamun consisted of four log shacks built end to end like box-cars,--living room, dining room, kitchen and bunk house, known as Charlie Dunn's Stopping Place, and also a small log store which contained the Post Office, all owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Dunn. From here I walked to Arthur Bennett's,--the last settler to the west, located on the north shore of the lake, about two miles east of Coal Point. From Bennett's, I explored the west end of Wabamun Lake, which was difficult to do because the ice was still in the lake, but was not safe to travel on, and the lake shore was narrow in places, and rough, with many windfalls to climb over.

The Dominion Surveyors had recently surveyed and cut the land lines and the acreage of the land fractions around the lake had not been figured at Ottawa, so I could not file on the homestead fractions until they knew the acreage at the land office in Edmonton. When I returned to Edmonton I bought the fractional South West quarter of section 7-53-5-W5th Mer. from the C.P.R. land company, making a payment on the whole quarter until they received the acreage from Ottawa. This land now extends from Mr. Carlson's to the big wharf. I wanted the adjoining fractional North-West quarter of section 6, for my school chum, Arthur Hovey, who was leaving the East to join me at Edmonton, so while waiting in Edmonton for him to come, I sent a telegram each morning to Ottawa, asking them to wire the acreage contained in N.W.¼ of 6 to the Land Office in Edmonton. After five or six days they wired the acreage as requested and I filed on this land (by proxy) for Hovey. At this time the C.N. Station in Edmonton was our nearest railroad, though work was starting on the Can. Northern branch to Stony Plain. The nearest we could then get by pack pony to Seba was to a fishing shack in the Bay just east of Coal Point.

There was an old winter fishing trail from Seba to Island Lake. There was no habitation at Seba except an old bark covered teepee about where Hurry Home now stands. There was a small log fishing shack on the Point across the Bay S.E. from Seba, with a sod roof and a mud fireplace.

Perhaps I should here mention that Mr. Warren Prevey who later became head of the Edmonton City Dairy, had filed on the S.E.¼ of Sec. 12-(where Mr. Dan Smith now lives)-in the month of March, having driven up the Lake on the ice. He had a small dairy in Edmonton then and for a year or more, was undecided whether to hold on to the dairy or the homestead. So much for exploration.

When Hovey arrived we bought a tent and the tools we would need, and when we reached Charlie Dunn's store as Wabamun, we purchased the usual "grub stake", consisting of flour, lard, sow-belly, beans, prunes, canned milk, tea, coffee, salt, sugar, baking powder, matches and tobacco, and at Wabamun we bought a pretty good flat-bottomed boat and rigged up a "leg of mutton" sail made of gunny sacks, to help with a favorable wind,- then set out with our first boat-load for the "West End", as Seba was then known, with high hopes and great confidence in ourselves as pioneers, mainly, I think because our great grandfathers had pioneered together along the shore of beautiful Lake Massawippi in Stanstead County, Quebec.

They had to make one or two trips per year by ox team to Montreal, one hundred miles away, for their supplies. Pioneering was, I think, in our blood because we really enjoyed its hardships.

After several trips to Wabamun with the boat, we at last had our outfit landed safely at the West End, including the two rear wheels and axle of a heavy wagon which had broken down on the trail near Wabamun. The owner said he did not blame the old wagon, because he had pioneered in Wisconsin with it years before. We used this gear to transport our building logs to the building site by raising one end of the log with a heavy pry and then fastening a chain near the centre of the log and over the axle, which would then carry the weight of the log and we would each take hold of a wheel and roll it along as the artillery men sometimes did their cannon during the civil war.

In this way we placed our logs on a skidway and were ready to lay the sills for the first house in Seba. When we had fitted the four corners of the sills we laid flat down and sighted across them using the lake shore half a mile away to level them by.

In three weeks time we had the logs all up, hewed rafters on,

door and windows cut out, and brought enough rough lumber by boat from Wabamun for the roof, door and window jambs, and at last had a good rubberoid roof on, a split puncheon floor which never raised any dust when sweeping it, because the dirt all fell through the cracks. We had a rough board door and three two-light windows. All that was now needed was the chinking and mudding the cracks between the logs which could be done in September and give the green logs a chance to dry out. We were not quite satisfied with our work and noticed some mistakes in our first attempt at building. However, we did not do too badly because it still stands, after thirty-eight years, as Massawippi Cottage, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. W.C. Rowe.

Until about the first of August we had been "monarchs of all we surveyed". No one came to bother us. We had cut out the trees that had fallen across the lake shore from Seba to Coal Point and had laid corduroy across some wet places along the shore so we could get through with a pack pony. Then I bought a sturdy young "cayeuse" through the Indian agent at the Reserve from some Stony Indians from Morley Reserve. We named the poney "Billy" and he proved to be a great help to us. He had evidently never seen any oats, because it was some time before we could induce him to try to eat any.

We had heard that the Canadian Northern Railway was planning to extend its line through to the Coast, when one fine day, Ole Larson's big sail boat hove in sight and brought a load of tents and supplies for a Can. Nor. survey party that was cutting a line along the north shore of the lake. Ole brought up several boat loads, one consisted of a double wagon, the horses were later led along our pack trail, and Ole's last boat load brought along

he cook and cookee- so they and the teamster proceeded to make amp, and when supper was ready we saw ten or twelve husky young xe-men and surveyors coming along the shore to supper. Their hief was Mr. Chalmers, who I think was later head of the Survey ept. of the Alberta Government. They brought us the news of the an Francisco earthquake. Right here our solitude ended.

From then on, came the landseekers, following the Railway urveyors, and filed on every available homestead, mosskeg and ll, and our place became quite a noted "Stopping Place".

Hovey was a good camp cook, and could fry fish like doughnuts, rowned all over, and those land seekers could eat plenty. They arried their own blankets and some slept in our tent, others slept n the floor of the shack, until we were able to build a bunk house. was busy trying to get enough supplies up the lake. Some of the ettlers (note that a landseeker becomes a settler when he files on homestead) came up the lake by boat with tents and "grubstake" nd packed their outfits to their homesteads on their backs, and hen started cutting trail to Seba through the heavy woods. As oon as they "pitched" their tents on their homesteads, the clock egan ticking off the three years residence required before they ould "prove up" and own the land.

Others with ox-team and horse team loads, were camped at the ittle creek on the trail just west of Rexboro Corner, with six iles of heavy timber to cut through to reach Seba. However ith a gang working from Rexboro and one from Seba, they got the rail through for light loads.

But now, another problem arose. These settlers wanted us to ring their mail from Wabamun when we went and perhaps bring a few supplies if we could. I would leave for Wabamun Sunday p.m. with

the boat or on Billy. The mail arrived there Monday A.M. then. Soon, I became literally swamped with errands, and I realized that a Post Office and store of some sort was the next step. However, winter came early, was severe and long, and the settlers could then bring in their supplies by team across the lake. I walked from Wabamun to Seba on the ice on Nov. 9th and an item from my diary of May 25/07 states--"Ice is going fast today. The Can. Northern reached (New) Stony Plain before "freeze up". Diary-Jan 1st/07 states-"Drove from Mewassin to Stony Plain to catch the train for town--weather, 34 below."

The train did not come nor did it come the next day, so I drove to Edmonton with some farmers, (not settlers here.) Diary--Jan. 24th/07--"G.T.P. survey party now at Coal Point." Here the Grand Trunk Pacific enters and the Can. Northern fades out of the picture, as the Ottawa Government refused to ratify this route for the C.N. and allowed the Government sponsored G.T.P. first choice of routes.

From Diary--

March 25th/07-- Today mailed a peition for a Post Office with 18 signatures.

March 31st/07--Easter Sunday, went on snowshoes to Smither's and Harrison's to see them about forming a Local Improvement district.

April 4th/07--Mr. J. Both and I started work on Cull's new store building.--Shovelled snow away in forenoon and laid four sills in afternoon. Ground not frozen under the heavy snow."

April 26th/07--It snowed so hard none of us worked

on the store. Mr. Silcox, G.T.P. surveyor here tonight.

July 18th/07-- Opened up goods and opened up the store for business.

The Post Office was held up for some time for want of a mail carrier. R.P. Cull was the first post-master--Jos. Arkenberg was the first mail carrier (a weekly mail from Wabamun) and the Post Office was named "Seba" by the Postmaster General's Dept.

I think we had suggested three names for it--mostly West something or other, containing two words. At that time the Postal authorities were opposed to long place-names, and therefore, many short names appeared on the map, such as Seba, Inga, Irma, etc.

The word "Seba" is found in several places in the Bible.
Genesis 10-7-, gives "Seba" as one of the sons of Cush.
Psalm 72-101-"The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts."
Isaiah-43-3.- "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee."

So, it would seem to mean a district or area of Southern Palestine lying between the southern end of the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Probably first named for "Seba"--the son of Cush. So the name comes from a good source.

After having solved the store and Post Office problem,- we became interested in some coal prospects we had discovered when prospecting the creeks. In this connection, Dr. O.F. Strong, dentist, and Mr. Ernest Chauvin, insurance agent of Edmonton first came to Seba.

Mr. Chauvin was immediately impressed with Seba's picturesque setting and became keenly interested in Seba's future, as a summer resort.

Seba had seen much activity during the winter of 1906 and 1907

with survey parties cutting "try lines", location lines and lastly "revision" parties putting on the final touches while we were guessing where the townsites would be located. The winter of 1907 & 8 was not so severe as 1906 & 7 and along came the tie cutters, and the settler's with teams made well hauling ties to the right of way.

Then came the right of way contractors and established their camp. Now comes a little "side light" to the story of Seba. I had been accused of going "high hat" when I bought some sheets for my bed and had engaged a neighbor woman to do my laundry--instead of the customary method of "boiling up" by building a fire under two five gallon gas cans hung on a pole out in the door yard.

One day I was busy in the store when a neighbor woman came in hurriedly and whispered something in my ear--and away went my sheets and "emergency" bottle of brandy. It was a girl, the first baby born at Seba, to Mr. & Mrs. Lindstrom of the firm of Hanson & Lindstrom who had the contract for clearing the right of way through Seba. Mrs. Lindstrom had recently arrived from Sweden and spoke only a few words of English.

Mr. Hanson was a well-educated young Swedish lad with personality, and some years later when I read an article about the wonderful success a young man by the same name had achieved in the Prince Rupert area, and that he had followed the railway construction from Edmonton to Prince Rupert, I felt certain that he got his start at Seba.

The original railway survey followed the lakeshore from Wabamun to Seba, then ran into the steep bank between the present Salvation Army Camp and the base-ball ground to the west. This obstacle together with the sharp curve (I think it was about a 120 degree curve from where the line left the lakeshore in a S. West direction to a northerly direction where it crossed the present

Bellarat road.) caused the Engineering Dept. to seek an alternate route.

However, they did not find a better route until after the right of way through Lake had been cleared and some of the sub-contractors had established their camps and were ready to commence grading, and 51,000 ties had been cut and piled alongside the right of way.

Mr. Harper, the resident engineer had a motor boat and one day when returning from Watamun by boat he noticed a slight depression extending N.E. from where Cobb station now stands, and after investigating the find, ordered no work to start on the Cobb location.

As we know, the road was changed, and what a blessing it was for Cobb. The old location would have ruined nearly half of the Cobb property in fact, besides the loss of train passing right and day, out to section owners, etc.

During the winter of 1907 and 1908, I had some log buildings built on my C.P.R. land consisting of a cook-house, bunk house and a large stable all of which I rented as a "stopping place". We were the only ones with the store and Post Office to look after "stoppers". (These buildings were moved away when the townsite survey left them standing in the middle of the street.) Every day, many times, I went through my stock at the store. During the winter, hauling general traders' supplies--either for the big cattle or sheep outfits for the trade at Brooks. In the spring of 1908 grading started, all along the railway, and some work was continued during the winter of 1908 and '09 along the rock cut just east of Cobb station, -- but it was early autumn in 1910 before we could see the smoke from the locomotive of the track-laying train about coming near across the Cobb Reserve at the east end of the lake. What a thrill it was to,--at last that after having traded at one of the most [illegible]

[illegible] pull out in Selbi station without them. We [illegible] not [illegible] all about our business from our library to [illegible] children [illegible] to [illegible] and after [illegible] such as--"are you sure you're not out of fuel?--and--"perhaps you're giving it too much spark", etc., when really we had to have ides that made it go then we had what made it stop.

Mr. J.A. Welch and family came to Selbi in June 1910. After I had sold the land that the store was on, to the Townsite company I sold the store [illegible] to Mr. Percy Fitz, who had started a store at Selbi. Mr. Fitz then brought his friend, Mr. Welch, to Selbi to take over the Selbi store.

Mr. Welch has kindly sent me the following information about the first party of summer visitors to come to Selbi. The first party came to Selbi in Oct. 1910, on the first train the old G.T.P. ran west from Edmonton to carry passengers. It only went as far as Wetaskiwin at the first fair held there and then Mr. Jarkovsky took the party to Selbi on the "Bessie" which was later purchased and run between Selbi and Fallis.

In the party of twenty who came to Selbi in 1910 was Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Betty, Mr. Watson, Dr. Sloan (Dr.), Mr. Robertson, Mr. W.C. Talbot, the two Williamson brothers, and Mr. and Mrs. McIntyre.

The second party came out on May 24th, 1911, and was brought over from Fallis in the "Ole I". There were 17 people in that second party, some of whom were Mr. & Mrs. J.D.A. McIntyre, Mr. & Mrs. E. Chauvin, [illegible] Williamson, R. Ferguson and Mr. Montgomery, as well as I can remember.

In June the first building-material began to arrive at Fallis

and the traffic increased so that the purchase of the larger boat the "Harrill", became necessary, and the deal was completed on July 6th, 1931. This boat was in service until 1941 when I retired. Mr. Dowling brought in his boat the "Lily of the Lake", in the spring of 1919 and the "Waverly" was bought from the Alberta Motor Boat Co. the same year by the Pete Boat Co.

All these boats continued in the Ferry service until sometime after we joined the Army, and were disposed of during the war with the exception of the "Waverley" which was eventually sold to Denny Smith."

I can remember that the first shipment of building material for Pete's cottage, to arrive in Valley consisted of three carloads of lumber and shingles shipped direct from B.C. Most of it was cedar which was of course light and allowed the cars to be filled to their rated weight without having excess weight.

Now,--how to get all this material across the lake to Pete's was a problem. Mr. Trimble and I took the "Ole I" and built up a large flat platform used to bring equipment, baled hay, cats, etc., for during railway construction. We found that the "Ole I" could move the barge along slowly in calm water, but a light wind would stall us, and a brisk wind would drift us across to the south shore. So we would load half a carload on the barge during the day with my farm team, then tow it to Sobs at night if there was no wind, or Mr. Smith and Mr. Welch, as they would deliver the quantities required to the various lots with a team of them. It was a battle - but we won in the end.

In June, 1911, Hoover, Jensen and I decided that we would go and see some of the "green pastures" that were then so highly advertised at Lac La Hache, B.C. and other places. We bought a tent, camping outfit, sleeping bags, etc. and

of Seba which to me can never be filled. The following is taken from a letter I received while in hospital in England--from Major Winser, Officer commanding "D" Company 49th. Batt. Canadian B.E.F. France, Nov. 10th, 1917.

"Old 'D' got a bad cutting up and lost a lot of fine gallant fellows,---sorry to say, Angus Smith and Hovey were killed."

I returned to Seba in the spring of 1919, not quite broken but badly bent, both financially and physically and began the long, hard, struggle. Seba had more than held its own during the war, had made some gain each year and now its citizens realized that some authority and administration was necessary for future planning. Fortunately the Provincial Government had devised a Municipal plan known as a summer village which had similar rights and privileges to that of the ordinary village with the exception of not being free to issue debentures, and the annual meeting and elections are held in midsummer, and the members of the council are free to reside elsewhere. So, in 1920- an application was made and Seba became incorporated as a Summer Village.

At the first election of the Village Council, several nominees withdrew their nominations to allow me the honor of being a member of the first Village Council. I appreciated this gesture very much indeed. I think the first council consisted of the late Mr. J.W. Mould, Mr. McMullen and myself with Mr. Garnet Pearson as Secretary.

One year on the council taught me that no permanent resident should be on the council. The village had no caretaker at that time, and whenever a dead jackfish washed up on the shore, I was immediately notified and was expected to do something about it. The other council members were safely out of reach in the City, - except for week-ends.

Seba had grown thus far by what might be termed a "community spirit" and its last community act was when we had a "bee" and tore up the old rotted sidewalk and built the foot bridge across the creek on First Avenue. Office and business men wore old clothes and worked like "troopers", the children and their mothers helped, there were gangs working the whole length of the Avenue, and when night came and the job was finished, everyone went home tired but happy.

Before we paid taxes, the dead jackfish would have been taken care of just as the old sidewalk was.

This, of course is far from being complete, and is more the story of "Cull" than of "Seba", but I think you can easily 'cull out' what you don't want.

I remain,

Yours truly,

R.P. Cull.